

Dental Population Health Metrics Initiative (FY02 – 2018)

Impact

A standardized system was developed and implemented that will enable dental care providers to identify both high-risk and low-risk patients and tailor care accordingly. This will enable providers to concentrate on prevention for high-risk patients as well as potentially decrease specific types of over-treatment for low-risk patients.

Description

The Dental Population Health Metrics Initiative refined the existing dental classification system to include measures for caries risk and tobacco use. These measures are captured electronically in the Corporate Dental Application (CDA). The goal was to make caries risk and tobacco use assessment mandatory for 100% of annual dental examinations for Active Duty Soldiers.

Outcomes

- The initiative succeeded in making the caries risk and tobacco risk assessments mandatory during the annual dental exam. The measures have been incorporated into the CDA by DENCOM and are mandatory fields.
- This initiative has the potential to save money by decreasing over-treatment. One example of over-treatment providing each patient, including those with a low risk of caries, a fluoride application following a prophylaxis. The elimination of this type of over-treatment would result in a savings of \$72 per low-risk patient.

Innovative Features

- The initiative identifies those at highest risk for dental disease so that, in a busy exam setting, dental healthcare providers can focus on appropriate prevention strategies.
- The electronic identification of units that have a large proportion of high-risk Soldiers will enable dental health promotion activities to be better targeted.
- The identification of low-risk individuals could avoid costs by decreasing over-treatment.

Lessons Learned

- Involve the Office of the Surgeon General (OTSG) specialty consultant from the beginning of the process when developing a new mandatory measure.
- When considering whether to implement a new mandatory measure, start small.
- Conduct a pilot test to evaluate whether the new measure will, in fact, make a difference.
- Find and solve problems before taking the measure Army-wide.
- If results are positive, conduct a replication study at multiple sites. Positive results from the replication study will support implementation of the measure Army-wide.